



The Zen Pen Guide to Writing Mindfully

So, you want to write but have no idea where to start. Here are five steps to try.

1. Get some paper, a pen, and a timer.

An actual pen and paper, and any timer you want.

2. Set the timer for five minutes.

No more, no less.

3. Now, close your eyes and take three conscious breaths.

Don't change anything, just breathe normally. It's easy. We do it all the time.

4. After three breaths, open your eyes, pick up your pen, start the timer and write without stopping.

Look at whatever is right in front of you and write what you see, with specifics, like this: *Green pen. Tangled white phone earbuds. Turquoise coffee mug, with the cold dregs of this morning's coffee because I never get to finish a cup while it's still hot.*

Keep your pen moving for the full five minutes. Don't stop to think, filter, edit, reread, don't stop for anything. You don't have to write fast. Just steadily, while gently, quietly uncovering the content of your mind.

5. When the timer goes off, put your pen down and stop. Now.

There. You've done it. You've written something today. You got started and you found something to write about. And it only took five minutes.

Do this again tomorrow—or the next day—and you have the beginnings of a writing practice. When you miss a day (and you will), be gentle with yourself. Just try again when you notice you've skipped. And please, no "shoulds." Contemplative writing is a practice of self-compassion and joy. Enjoy the moment. Write your heart out.

(Want help? Find me online: <https://www.zen-pen.ca/>)